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LAUGHTER AND SIN

- USSR -

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LAUGHTER AND SIN.

-USSR-

Following is the translation of an unsigned article entitled "I smekh i grekh" (English version above) in Nauka i Zhizn' (Science and Life), No 7, Moscow, July 1960, page 59.

The remarkable successes of applied astronautics dealt one more shattering blow to the religious world outlook. The clergy, however, tries to assume a pose as if nothing terrible had happened to religion. With the most serious miens they discuss how to satisfy the religious "needs" in space, without which man cannot move forward to master other worlds. It is "forgotten" that churches of all faiths opposed for centuries any measurement of skies and pronounced those attempts contradictory to the "holy books" and blasphemous to God. The absurd statements of today's theologians, trying to reconcile the Bible or Talmud with astronautics, once more demonstrates the bankruptcy of religious views.

Saturday on the Moon.

The question of how Hebrew astronauts will determine religious holidays is very important to the theologians of the state of Israel, because the lunar calendar differs from that of earth. This "problem" was discussed at two church conferences. The participants in the debates concluded that on the moon the Jews will remain simple mortals and therefore should act according to earthly laws and customs. The only exception is the status of Saturday. Because the lunar day lasts approximately 14 earth days, the Jews on the moon are obliged to observe Saturday twice during that time span.

It should be noted, that a number of similar questions exist. For example, what about the lunar night? The astronauts won't sleep for half a month, will they? And so

long as they have to work, one cannot do without a Sabbath. On the other hand, it has been stipulated that it be observed only during the day. Actually, an insoluble contradiction! This is enough to call a third conference of Israeli theologians.

Missionaries in Space.

Some Catholic clergymen write about missionary activities in space. Particularly zealous in this matter is one Jesuit, Domeniko Grasso, instructor at the well-known Gregorian University in Rome. Not long ago he remarked that it is necessary to consider how to bring inhabitants of other planets within the bosom of the Catholic Church.

However, after profound "research," Grasso found himself muddled. The beings inhabiting the Moon and other planets, he says, are not descendants of Adam. That means they did not commit original sin and were not redeemed by Christ. But, from this it follows that there are no religious preconditions for clasping such creatures to the bosom of the church. Now what? Grasso asserts that some inhabitants of other planets might have at one time been tempted just as Adam was. The comic missionaries should "save" them. The author of those profound conclusions now has only to show that on other heavenly bodies exist creatures who have fallen prey to the temptations of the biblical serpent.

Finally, Grasso assumes that clergymen will not have anything to do on the other planets, because nothing actually beckons them out there. The scientists preparing the first space expeditions do not plan to take the "servants of God" with them. Still, Grasso discovers how the Catholic space missionaries should spend their time: It seems that when man travels to other worlds, he has to take with him not only the word of God, but also the servants of God. Here, then, is the crux of the matter! The churchmen do not think of inhabitants of the universe, but of earthly people, who turn more and more to science and less and less to religion.

The Enterprising Priest.

Ideas are ideas, but faith is faith, and the preachers of religion do not want to lose their income, even in space. In this respect, the most enterprising has been the British clergyman Alfred Baldwin /Baldwin/. Already in 1955 he submitted to the American Society of Interplanetary Communications a request to build the first Catholic Church on the Moon. The "shepherd of souls" is not at all interested in saving the souls of the inhabitants of that heavenly body. He is guided by hopes of profit from the

moon. Anticipating cutthroat competition, Baldwin especially reserved the right to participate in exploiting the Moon's mineral wealth, in fishing in the Sea of Nectar(!), etc. One can only wonder how this enterprising priest did not at the same time lease similarly profitable portions of Mars and Venus!